

ISSUE: Media Literacy

BACKGROUND: When it comes to Native American information the web and other resources have a plethora of offerings, but there are serious problems with some of the information provided. As with any research, it is vital for the teacher to instruct the students in how to be critical users of media. Teaching students to evaluate the information presented in various forms of media is essential to avoiding the disturbing trend of regurgitation within educational assessment.

EXAMPLE LESSONS: Use the materials within your own classroom texts as opportunities to look deeper into the subject of Native Americans. When you come across Native American and minority issues, these can be starting points for further meaningful exploration. Within the textbooks provided for today's curriculum there are opportunities to research specific tribes, tribal governments, current issues in Native America, etc. When you find opportunities, even if they come merely as small notations, research has a moment to begin.

Title: Media Sleuths

Standard: Apply criteria to evaluate information (i.e. origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas). Analyze and adapt an inquiry process (i.e. identify question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product, and evaluate product and process).

Grade Level: Can be adapted for all grade levels.

Lesson:

When you begin research into Native Americans and the issues that affect them, it is even more necessary than usual to evaluate the sources. With every inquiry the following questions should be asked:

Who is the author? Not just his/her name, but what is his/her background?

Why was the information presented (motivation)?

Does the information reflect bias or outright racism?

Is the information supported by any particular institution or association?

Does the information found conflict with information found elsewhere? Who is correct?

Assessment:

When students can give a presentation that shows an amalgam of valuable information from a variety of sources representing viable informants, they have begun to critique and categorize important information that reflects concerted inquiry and processing.

Research of this type is not simply regurgitation, but instead helps to combat false, misleading, biased, and racist information by preventing it from gaining credibility merely because it's out there.